

The LENINIST

Ireland p3

Employment Training p4-5

Workers' Theatre p6

Brent p8

No lead from the TUC

EVEN WITH the expulsion of the EETPU, Bournemouth's Trades Union Congress undoubtedly saw the "official" labour movement take a further – though not dramatic – new realist step to the right. Certainly the TUC has no winning strategy to smash the Poll Tax, Employment Training or the bosses' drive for union free sites.

The TUC stands exposed, as never before, as a toothless talking shop. It is unable to stand up against the government, unable to act as a coordinating centre, not because of a fall in membership, but because it is dominated by rotten – ie reformist – politics. The TUC has been reduced to hot air and empty gestures. This can be seen all too clearly in its main debates and decisions.

●**EETPU expulsion.** One of the first decisions of the TUC was to expel the EETPU. This was greeted as a blow to the right by the likes of the *Morning Star* and its Communist Party of Britain cheerleaders. This as we all know is not the case.

Only the AEU and half of the 30 CPSA delegation voted against expulsion – and even then they were merely asking for a stay of execution. The overwhelming majority of right led unions voted for the expulsion. They had to. The EETPU wanted to be expelled. It forced the TUC, right, left and centre into a position where it could not but take the decision to expel it.

The EETPU arrogantly and sneeringly refused to accept the Bridlington rules of the TUC – that is why it was expelled. It was not expelled because of its scab-

bing at Wapping or its espousal of business unionism. Hammond made it perfectly clear that the EETPU would neither apologise nor change its ways in the future. As Willis explained, if the TUC had not expelled the EETPU, it would have been the end of the TUC as we know it. So expelled it was. Even then the EETPU looks like coming back into the TUC through the back door, via its merger with the AEU.

That the only organised left grouping in the EETPU, *Flashlight*, has decided to desert the EETPU to form the EPIU, which will at best have less than 10,000 members, is a gift to the right in and out of the EETPU. The left in the EETPU – a union which was led by communists from the early 1940s until 1961 – has now been completely marginalised. Tragically this is a self inflicted wound which leaves the backward majority under Hammond's unchallenged influence. This can only but strengthen the right when the EETPU returns united with the AEU as a giant force for 'moderation' in the TUC.

We communists will fight for the unity of the trade union movement. But we do so in a way that does not strengthen the right. The EETPU should be brought back into the TUC – not through bureaucratic merger – but through the victory of the militant rank and file.

●**ET Programme.** Again if you believed the *Morning Star* you would believe that the TUC had unequivocally voted against ET. The *Morning Star* headlined the TUC's decision as: "Thumbs down for workfare"

(September 8 1988). What the TUC voted for in reality was a fudge.

John Edmonds of the GMB claimed on TV that he had pulled a "shabby little trick" in amending the Nalgo motion calling for a boycott of ET. By inserting an amendment – in his words an "elephant trap" – calling for a two year run up to the boycott, he effectively allowed those who wish to cooperate with ET a free hand. But surely whatever Edmonds may say Ron Todd and John Daly are hardly political virgins. They are past masters of the art of conference procedure. They can see an "elephant trap" coming miles off.

A much more likely explanation of the success of Edmonds' "dirty little trick" is that the TGWU and Nalgo want to be seen by their members and others as standing on the left, taking a hard position against the government. But at the same time they appear not to want to be committed to actually organising anything concrete.

That is why when Neil Kinnock – who is incidentally a TGWU sponsored MP – called for the TUC to oppose the demand for a boycott, all that Todd could do was huff and puff and strenuously deny that the TGWU would be voting against him and Hattersley in the Labour Party leadership elections next month. (And as we know even with the 17 right wing T&G exec members walking out the 'hard left' majority – including so-called 'communists' – unanimously backed the Kinnock/Hattersley nightmare ticket). When it comes to the crunch, Todd is more concerned with having a smooth ride and ensuring that he gets that seat

in the House of Lords when he retires, than backing those who want to fight the Tory government.

The fightback against ET will not be led by the TGWU, let alone the TUC, it will rely on the strength, drive and imagination of organisations like the Unemployed Workers Charter which staged a 100 strong lobby on the opening day of the TUC against ET. It will fight to smash ET through campaigning to unionise all ET workers around the slogan: Into your union! Off the dole – onto the payroll!

●**European Community.** How far the TUC has moved to the right over recent years, the degree it feels its own impotence, can be seen in the TUC's acceptance of the European Community.

Gone are the days when the TUC would pass resolutions calling for withdrawal on the nod. Now it looks to the EC to deliver what it cannot obtain from Thatcher.

Ron Todd, who is chairman of the TUC's international committee, admitted that he saw no hope in making any headway through Westminster, and because of this he looks to the EC and getting a "decisive majority for social progress in the European parliament". The mass of congress delegates agreed. They gave the European Commission president, Jacques Delors, a standing ovation and unanimously voted to work within the institutions of the post-1992 EC. As the *Financial Times* noted, this "marks a fundamental shift in the unions' approach to the European Community." (September 9 1988) Even Isolda McNicoll in the *Morning Star* had to grudgingly acknowledge the re-

treat; though she, like all left reformists, remains stuck in its little England rut, seeking liberation in a return to the supposed golden age of national sovereignty rather than through the future and world revolution.

●**Solidarity.** Only a few years ago the TUC was voting to defy the Tories anti-trade union laws and risk imprisonment. Now it pleads to Kinnock to repeal them. In 1984 it gave Arthur Scargill a hero's reception but this year it voted him off the general council and closed its eyes to the miners still languishing in jail because of the 'crimes' they committed during the Great Strike. Only a year ago the TUC was calling for workers' sanctions against South Africa; all it can do now is to point to the Tories and call them hypocrites.

Given the lack of fight, the fudge and the general retreat at this year's TUC, it hardly needs stating that the votes on peace, anti-trade union laws and women – as well as those in solidarity with the P&O strikers, healthworkers and the postal workers – are hardly worth the paper they are written on. They are good for the image of the TUC, but they commit the TUC and its affiliates precisely to nothing.

The TUC calls on the Tory government to do this, and for the "next Labour government" to do that, but the TUC will stick to what it knows – hot air. In light of this, it is foolish indeed to take its resolutions seriously. The more overwhelmingly they were passed, the more worthless they are ... note that most were passed unanimously.

Why the shift to the right?

THE SHIFT to the right in the official labour movement has been taking place for a number of years now, in fact since the early years of the decade. It has affected all sections of the official labour movement. It is not only the new realists of the EETPU and the AEU which have attempted to sell themselves to companies in beauty contests. The right-centrist GMB and the left MSF have also tried, albeit less successfully.

The reasons for the general shift to the right are multifaceted and complex. They cannot be reduced to the increasing influence of new realism alone. The shift to the right affects all unions, including those traditionally on the left – take the South Wales NUM for instance. In the last analysis, it is a result of reformism itself which dominates across the board at the top of the official labour movement. Reformism's attempt to adapt to capi-

talism's drive to increase the rate of exploitation in the 1980s, and the Thatcherite brand of bourgeois morality, which is designed to facilitate this, leads to what John Edmonds calls shedding "fundamentalist baggage" and what Ken Gill calls "facing up to facts".

This shift to the right is by no means preordained. If the mass of the rank and file are active, confident and scoring successes, then it is quite possible that the labour movement bureaucracy will move to the left – in part through a simple opportunist effort to stay in office, in part through openly right bureaucrats being replaced by new leaders emerging from below.

This is not the case today.

The 1980s have been a decade of heroic working class battles. But these battles have been overwhelmingly defensive and, on the whole, the workers have suffered defeat. The result has been a general mood of confusion, lack of

confidence and passivity among the rank and file.

All of this has enhanced sectionalism and apoliticism. These are the ideal conditions for the right to be strengthened in the workers' movement. Lack of rank and file activity removes the main restraint on the official labour movement's 'natural' tendency to move to the right.

Added to this must be the disintegration of the "official" communist movement in Britain. Although in the late 1960s and early 70s the Communist Party of Great Britain was committed to politics that were frankly left reformist, it did provide an organised centre for militant trade unionists.

In relative terms to the Labour Party, the CPGB might have been small but its history, traditions and contacts meant that it carried far more political weight than its membership figures suggested. This is something even recognised by the

bourgeois media (see David Fellow's article in *The Independent* (September 7 1988).

The disintegration of "official" communism is a result of extreme opportunism. This meant that what remained of "official" communism at Bournemouth could be used as a weapon in the hands of right reformism. Thus we have the strange sight of Brian Gould – the darling of the technocratic right in the Labour Party – identifying himself with a central CPGB document. "Here is the map of the territory we have to capture" he enthused, over *Facing up to the future in The Guardian*.

The CPGB collapse into neo-Fabianism is a gift for right wing reformism. "If the communists are saying nationalisation is an old fundamentalism which has no future then only a fool would insist on keeping it as policy" they successfully argued at the TUC.

It must be said, for all its claims

to the contrary, that the newly formed CPB is qualitatively no different from the CPGB it split from. It does not stand on the politics of revolution and genuine communism. Like the CPGB, it is committed to a reformist programme and perspectives, although whilst the CPGB has now lined up with the Labour Party centre, the CPB aligns itself with the Labour Party left. This is a matter of degree not substance.

If the working class is really going to shift the balance of class forces and turn the tables on the Tories, then it is essential that those reformists hawking themselves around the TUC as 'communists' are replaced by the genuine article – Leninists. The sooner that is done, the sooner the TUC will stop spouting hot air and the sooner it will become a body which advances, and not holds back, the working class struggle.

Jack Conrad



Fortnightly paper of the Leninists:
for a genuine Communist Party

INF MIGHT have pulled the rug from under CND and led to its rapid decline, but to the average supporter of 'official' communism, peace seems to be budding out all over. Whether they be in the Euro CPGB, the CPB or the NCP, the 'officials' are over-the-moon that cruise missiles are leaving Greenham Common; that the Iran-Iraq war has ground to a halt; that the Soviet army is deserting Afghanistan; that peace talks on Angola are progressing and that a deal here might be followed by one in Kampuchea.

'Official' communists greet these developments as a sign of a future free of conflict, the dawn of sanity in international relations. Such pacifist clap trap is no local phenomenon. The utopian pacifism of 'official' communism in Britain is encouraged and fostered by the Gorbachev leadership.

Gorbachev is the Eric Hammond of the world communist movement – only he has not been expelled. Under his leadership the Soviet Union – the world's revolutionary centre – is attempting to construct a system of permanent peaceful coexistence with imperialism. This foreign policy is inextricably linked to his turn to 'market socialism' internally.

To court the sympathy of world imperialism, to show that he is a man they can do business with, Gorbachev has shifted the world communist movement even further to the right, agreed to unequal arms deals and offered to sell out living revolutions as if they were pieces of real estate.

In our view this is treachery on a scale Hammond could not even contemplate. Gorbachev not only puts socialism in the USSR at risk, he denies the fact that peace can only come through revolution.

No sane person would not welcome a final end to war. It is a horrible, vile business. The real question is how we are to abolish war. Communists have to face reality as it is. And the reality of world imperialism is that it remains just as warlike as it was in the past, except that now it possesses weapons of mass destruction that make those used in World War II look positively primitive.

We communists know that war – and that includes nuclear war – is inseparably connected to the class struggle within capitalist society. We communists understand that war cannot be abolished by appeals to rationality, common human interest or universal justice as Gorbachev does. War can only be eliminated through the success of the struggle to eliminate classes and through the victory of communism.

In capitalist society war is no aberration. It is the inevitable product of a system in which one capitalist nation is pitted against another in a desperate struggle for survival. Naturally the leaders of the capitalist nations want peace. The trouble is that the vital interests of the US are, by the very nature of the capitalist system, increasingly opposed to those of Japan and the European Community, and vice versa. And what are tensions over trade today are the seeds of tomorrow's wars – not only of one imperialist power bloc against another but imperialism against non-imperialist states, not least the socialist ones.

It is of great significance that Gorbachev and the 'official' communists in Britain have repeated their denial of the validity of Clausewitz's famous dictum that "war is the continuation of politics by other -forcible – means." That they do exposes how far the 'officials' have abandoned the doctrine of Marxism-Leninism and embraced bourgeois ideology.

The future of mankind is dependent on the struggle for revolution. Only by killing capital can we kill war. Hence genuine communists – as opposed to revisionists who sell revolutions and tell the oppressed not to resort to armed struggle – see the need for revolutionary wars. This is not something communists decree, it is a product of life itself. As the struggle of the masses intensifies, its politics are continued by forceful means in the form of armed insurrection, such as in South Africa, Palestine and Ireland today.

The Editor

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LETTERS

Free State Oppression

I am writing on behalf of the Dungarvan Anti-State Oppression Committee to expose the blatant example of state oppression against a political activist. He is Mr Terence Moroney, a 27 year old married man of Dungarvan, Co Waterford.

On February 15 1988 his home was searched by plain clothes and uniformed police. As a result of the search he was charged with possession of "incriminating documents", and on the basis of this he was also charged with membership of the INLA.

These so called "incriminating documents" were simply five 1988 calenders, 17 posters, three booklets on the recent history of the IRSP and two song books. All of these items can be purchased openly not only in this country but also in Britain and America.

This ludicrous situation can only be put into one category, and that is it's a back door form of internment. It's in the tradition of McCarthyism in the USA in the 1940s and '50s when the HUAC hounded people and destroyed their lives for holding radical political attitudes. It also shows the naked fear of the Twenty-six County establishment of anything that may endanger the status quo and bring forward the day of the emergence of the working class onto the political arena.

This is an obvious attempt by the state to smash the left, and if the state is not stopped in its tracks on this latest tactic of oppression, anyone involved in campaigns perceived by the state to be a threat is liable to be jailed on a trumped up charge. What in actual fact the state is saying is, if you support progressive campaigns or hold left wing views you can very easily end up like Terence Moroney or Don O'Leary.

The Committee can be contacted at the below address. Letters of solidarity or financial support more than welcome.

Jon Geazley
On behalf of the DASOC,
9 Shandon Street,
Dungarvan,
Co Waterford
Ireland

Surprised

As a relative newcomer to revolutionary politics and as a reader of your paper for the last couple of months, I thought you might be interested to know the outcome of a discussion I recently had with an RCP member regarding Afghanistan.

I was surprised (to say the least!) to hear Don Milligan, (whom I believe is one of the party's leading activists), tell me that the RCP actually support the imperialist backed, counterrevolutionary Mujahedin rather than the Soviet Red Army. His defence for this support lay with the fact that the Red Army is nothing more than an agent for the Soviet bureaucracy and given the bureaucracy's reactionary nature, the "invasion" of Afghanistan could not therefore be supported.

Granted, my knowledge of the Soviet Union is limited and what I do know of its bureaucracy and its army doesn't exactly impress me – far from it. But surely the system the Red Army is currently

upholding (before its imminent withdrawal) is better than the system the Mujahedin and imperialism would want to establish or that which existed before April 1978? Surely it is better than allowing women to be treated as chattel and allowing masses of the population to be thrown into abject poverty and barbarism? How can a 'communist' organisation defend a pro-imperialist, counterrevolutionary movement like the Mujahedin?

One last point. Don Milligan stated that there wasn't a revolution in Afghanistan in April 1978: a fellow leading member of the RCP told me that there had been. This seems to me to say everything about the RCP's world view – that is, they don't have one!

James Davies
London

Individual Terror?

Whilst one does not openly criticise or condemn any movement fighting for national liberation, we as communists do not believe in individual terror and/or assassination. Communists believe in organising the working class in building a revolutionary vanguard party fighting to build a socialist society.

The so-called liberation movements in Northern Ireland, especially the IRA, have not attempted to organise the working class across the province. They are sectarian and although they enjoy some protection from the Catholic areas, they do not necessarily get the support of the majority. The only way to achieve Irish unity is by uniting the working class across the two communities. This can only be done on the basis of a socialist programme.

It is not possible to 'bomb' the majority community into a united Ireland and if one had the scenario of a 'militant' South assisting as in Vietnam (there it was the North, of course), any 'victory' would probably result in a 'Unita' type situation like Angola.

Of course, the first prerequisite is the freeing of Ireland from British imperialism. Events in Ireland are undoubtedly affected by events here in mainland Britain, so the struggle in Ireland cannot go on in isolation. There is a need to build a strong revolutionary Leninist party here to carry on the class struggle for socialism in Britain.

Roy West
Bishop Stortford

More Please

I feel that some of the articles in *The Leninist* are very good. However, I feel that you should have more news and articles about events effecting the working class such as the P&O, Yardleys and Vicars strikes, the Piper Alpha oil platform, to name a few.

You have not done much, if anything, on these. There is the pernicious Housing Bill which has some very bad aspects for council tenants. This has not been mentioned, and I feel a deep analysis of this is necessary.

Bob Morris
Chingford

Style

I have been involved in the trade union movement for many years and have been in the Communist Party for about 15 years.

Although I have been a bit depressed about things in general and in our party in particular, I still attend my Communist Party branch on a regular basis. It is sad to see many comrades grasping in the dark trying to find an easy way out.

I have some sympathy with your arguments. However, if we are serious about building a strong communist movement based on Marxism-Leninism, I'm afraid the style adopted by *The Leninist* is not going to achieve it. It would be very useful if these young comrades tried to attend party branch meetings to develop the discussion on current political analysis; the party certainly needs it.

John Walker
London

Russian Questions

Recently, through so-called *glasnost*, we have heard a lot more about the Soviet Union under Stalin and later under Brezhnev. Unfortunately, after the 20th Congress, our party started to distance itself from the Soviet Union (hence Eurocommunism) but never fully discussed, analysed or held classes on Stalinism, etc.

We have seen different developments in the GDR, Hungary, Poland, Yugoslavia, China, Cuba and the Soviet Union. All are called 'socialism'. These have never, to my knowledge, really had an in-depth analysis by our party and a wide ranging discussion.

What do we mean by socialism? How do we see it working? What is wrong with the Soviet system? Have they really got socialism in any of these states, or are they bureaucratically deformed workers' states? Socialism should mean abundance. If the Soviet Union is socialist, how could anti-semitism survive and increase? Was Stalin anti-semitic? Why is there a growth of Zionism and Jews wanting to emigrate?

Recently we have seen the emergence of Pamyat, which is fascist, anti-semitic and Russian chauvinist. When you call for a multi-party democracy, do you really believe anti-socialist parties, groups etc, should be allowed free rein? If you see the dangers in Gorbachev's policies (I agree with your analysis) and where they can lead, you must also realise the greater dangers of organisations like Pamyat.

To overthrow the socialist system or deformed workers' states, there would need to be a counterrevolution. This is more likely to be led by Pamyat than by the bureaucracy.

Bill Foster
Chelmsford

Note: Letters have been shortened due to lack of space. For political security we have changed certain names, addresses and details.

WRITE OR RING

If you would like to reply to any of these letters, raise questions or comment on articles in *The Leninist* please write to The Editor, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX. Or phone us on 01-431 3135.

Hands Off Ireland!

Founding Statement

The coming year will be the twentieth anniversary of the latest phase of Britain's colonial war in Ireland. It has seen thousands killed and many more thousands jailed for resisting the British imperialist oppressor.

The level of resistance to the British occupation of the Six Counties of the north of Ireland by the nationalist masses there has been inspiring. Britain has tried many different ways to break the intransigence of the nationalist people, from internment to 'Ulsterisation'; from 'criminalisation' to shoot-to-kill and the London-Dublin accord. It has failed: the struggle for Irish freedom continues unabated.

But there is one aspect of the Irish war that Britain has so far won. It has maintained the allegiance of the majority of the working class in Britain, against the Irish people. Successive solidarity movements have failed to change this. Within the solidarity movement sectarianism and opportunism have been the rule.

Hands Off Ireland! was established at a meeting in London in mid September 1988 to reverse this situation. Unlike such apologies like the 'Time To Go!' charter (when in the last 800 years was it not 'time to go'?) **Hands Off Ireland!** unequivocally states that the only role that Britain can play in Ireland is a reactionary one. To evade a call for troops out now is to sow the illusion that Britain can, in some way, play a progressive role in Ireland. The last twenty years have made a mockery of any such claim. We stand by the two slogans which represent the bottom line for solidarity with the struggle for Irish freedom, and the fight to turn these anti-imperialist slogans into anti-imperialist practice: 'Troops Out Now!' and 'Self determination for the Irish people as a whole!'

We will be putting forward a powerful challenge to the implicitly pro-imperialist politics of 'Time To Go!', as the first step towards building a mass solidarity movement demanding Irish freedom.

Hands Off Ireland! is a democratic, militant campaign based on those individuals and organisations willing to fight for troops out now. We call on all anti-imperialists and supporters of Irish freedom to join us in this fight.

• Troops Out Now!

• Self determination for the Irish people as a whole!

AS COMMUNISTS we see the need to take support for the Irish fight for self determination from being the sole property of small revolutionary groups and sections of the Irish community in Britain and transform it into a position which the mass of workers in Britain make their own.

Campaigns like the Troops Out Movement and the Labour Committee on Ireland have through their work shown their inability to achieve this. The latest campaign, 'Time To Go!', does not even address itself to the task. It is a 'bring our boys back and save British taxpayers' money' farce.

Any campaign on the 'Irish question' which does not challenge the British state can only fall into opportunism. For Britain, the Six Counties is not a Vietnam or South Africa. It is part of the British state. And the British state is not going to see part of its territory taken away from it without the most bitter fight. Imperialism will not go of its own volition. It must be forced out.

The two slogans 'Troops out now!' and 'Self determination for the Irish people!' constitute the only solid basis for workers in Britain to support the Irish people's struggle for self determination. Those, like TOM, who claim to stand on them have never been able to translate it into practice. Hence to date, there is no effective challenge to Britain's rule in Ireland from the working class in Britain.

The *Leninist* has put forward an initiative based around these slogans. In mid September, with the support of the Irish Republican



When wasn't it time for them to go?

Socialist Party and others, **Hands Off Ireland!** was launched.

In launching this we are standing on the shoulders of the revolutionary CPGB of the '20s. We are reclaiming the name of **Hands Off Ireland!**, established by our Party in the early '20s, for genuine communism. Like the British section of Lenin's Comintern, through **Hands Off Ireland!**, we aim to mount an effective challenge to British imperialism and its reformist apologists such as 'Time To Go!'.

Initially, we will be mobilising for a distinct anti-imperialist contingent on the latter's march in August 1989, giving an effective challenge and alternative pole of attraction for anti-imperialists to this stunt's implicitly pro-imperial-

ist politics.

It is therefore unfortunate that, of the large number of anti-imperialist groups which we invited to take part in our initiative, so few felt that they could sign the founding statement. Those that felt unable to do so, for one reason or another, included Workers Power, the Revolutionary Communist Group, the Revolutionary Democratic Group and Red Action.

This is a pity. But it will not divert us from our aim of building **Hands Off Ireland!**. Nor will it blunt our aim of establishing anti-imperialist unity in action. In doing so an effective challenge to the politics of 'Time To Go!' is necessitated. Those, such as the IFM/RCP, who seem to favour a boycott are, in our view, mistaken. We would urge them to drop their agnostic stance on this and join **Hands Off Ireland!** in confronting the miserable apologetics of 'Time To Go!' head on. We call on all anti-imperialists to join us in this.

There is both a great need and potential for a mass movement based on such principles in theory and practice. Faced with this, as genuine anti-imperialists, we cannot afford to be lethargic. We must seize the time. **Hands Off Ireland!** has the potential to make a significant impact. If we approach our tasks with energy, initiative and principle, there is every reason to believe that it will be the beginning of the mass movement in support of the demand for Irish self determination that is so desperately needed. We call upon all principled anti-imperialists to join us. There is no time to waste.

Alan Merrick

Alan Tuffin, general secretary of the UCW has confessed himself baffled by the recent strike of his postal workers. "Who would have thought Tunbridge Wells, Truro and Ilfracombe would come out over this issue? This strike has been the Post Office's creation." In fact, the strike was the 'creation' of the militant rank and file of the union. The proposed 24 hour strike quickly escalated to involve two-thirds of all postal workers as the rank and file struck in protest at the use of casuals and suspensions. It took Tuffin and the union bureaucracy a full 12 days to regain control and calm things down. Thanks to their rotten leadership, the rank and file have had to go back to work with the divisive pay supplements that are in fact at the heart of the dispute still in force. Royal Mail managing director, Bill Cockburn, has conceded nothing and has already made clear that any 'replacement' pay scheme will be the same in all its essentials as the system currently operating. The postal workers' lack of independent national rank and file organisation meant that they could not maintain the initial momentum that gave their strike such force in the first place and stand against the sellout. The spirit to fight is still there – as evidenced by the 'ragged' return to work – but the most important lesson to come out of this dispute is that that spirit must be consolidated in rank and file organisation if workers are to take on the bosses, and their own leaders, and win.

On September 17, representatives of the UWC attended an 'Organising Against Workfare' conference in Manchester, convened by the TGWU Community Programme Shop Stewards Combine and chaired by leading Combine member Phil Griffen. The conference, although not large, was a productive and business like. It united delegates from several Labour Party constituencies, trades councils, various trade union branches, existing trade union campaigns against cheap labour scheme and unemployed activists. The main part of the day was spent discussing a 'Programme for Action' submitted to conference participants by the TGWU Combine. The UWC and others amended this draft programme to beef up its points and provide more clarity in terms of its practical implementation. At the end of the day, the conference produced a militant package of demands and set out a plan to coordinate the fight against ET/Workfare'. The UWC will sit on the coordinating committee for a national week day demonstration against ET in February 1989.

For more details of this action, plus a fuller report of the conference see the next issue of *Notes for Action*, the bulletin for UWC activists. Send 20p per copy plus a sae to UWC, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX.

In 1984 the Green Cross organisation, which gives financial aid to Irish political prisoners and their families, stopped its support for POW's of the Irish Republican Socialist Movement (IRSP and Inla). Because of this sectarian act the task of raising money for visits etc has fallen to the prisoners' families themselves and the IRSP. It is a heavy financial burden. Recently, Republican Socialist Prisoners Aid was set up in Britain to lift this burden. One of its aims is to seek sponsorship for IRSM prisoners from the organisations of the workers' movement in Britain. *The Leninist* has agreed to sponsor a prisoner at £8 a week, the rate for a married comrade. Those jailed by imperialism for fighting for Irish freedom have a right to demand our support. As internationalists, we will do our best to give it. With the government's new Bill to prevent the funding of "terrorists" this may well be deemed illegal. Workers in Britain must resist this. One thing our readers can do in protest at the state's criminalisation of Irish POW's is to give their wholehearted support to RSPA. This is not charity – it is basic internationalism. Support it. Fill in the enclosed banker's order form inserted in this issue, mail it to your bank and inform us of the amount, regularity of the payment.

We need you!



The postal strike has hit our £600 monthly fund badly. But even taking this into account, the fund was seriously down on what was necessary to fulfil our target by the end of the month. The accumulated total shortfall now from three months of being short of our target is nearly £800. This must be made up. As we wrote in the last issue, it is absolutely essential that for the rest of the year we receive surpluses. Our readers and sympathisers must take up their responsibilities to our paper and dramatically step up their financial contributions to *The Leninist*. We have no 'sugar daddy' socialist countries; no guilt-ridden millionaire backers; no prime site properties to flog off. We run our organisation on a shoe string budget and it is vital therefore that no one takes *The Leninist* for granted. Comrades, we need you!



• Phil Griffen: "the way to smash ET is to organise the unemployed"

Organising for Action!

NOBODY should be surprised by the TUC's noncommittal 'fudge' on Employment Training. *The Leninist* does not advocate cynicism: no, far from it. We have always said that if working class people want to defend their rights, if they want to advance to socialism, then they must not rely on the likes of Willis, Kinnock or their left critics cum apologists.

That is why, back in 1986, we sponsored the formation of the Unemployed Workers Charter. Its aim was to raise the demand for the organisation of the unemployed in the workers' movement and to lay the basis for its realisation through the formation of UWC groups up and down the country.

The UWC stands on explicitly anti-capitalist politics. It is against all these in our movement who excuse and even carry out attacks on the working class because of the dictates of capitalist profitability, legality or rationality. Above all it is against offloading the bosses' crisis onto the backs of the working class through the scourge of unemployment.

Its aim was, and is, to translate this into anti-capitalist practice. Thus, throughout its short history, the UWC has advanced this by such actions as solidarity work with striking civil servants and postal workers, town hall occupations for unemployment benefit and militant interventions on charity or electoral stunts like 'Hands Across Britain' and 'Jarrow '86'.

The state's latest attack on the unemployed – and all workers – is Employment Training. It demands a resolute response from our class. ET must, and can be, smashed.

The UWC has embarked on this fight. It launched an ongoing campaign to smash ET with a large and militant lobby of this year's TUC congress in Bournemouth, demanding that it boycott ET.



Fightback with the UWC

Concert against ET

To get the lobby off with a bang, we organised a send off concert for the lobbyists in London on Sunday September 4. The hall quickly packed out with both lobbyists and supporters. And it was not just the hall which was packed out.

The acts had to be sandwiched together to cram in as much as possible in the night. There was music from Thrum and the Big Red Band, poetry from Jock Scott, a Russian folk

dancing troupe (sadly, not straight from 'the mother country'), comedy from Ian Cognito and Felix and the premier performance of the Workers Theatre Movement, performing two pieces from the 'thirties. One comedian, Jim Tavaré, had to be turned away after dragging his 'prop' – a double bass – across London because there was no time to put him on (sorry Jim)!



At the UWC concert

The Lobby

About sixty UWC lobbyists arrived in Bournemouth from London, meeting up with those UWCers who had arrived from other parts of the country. We also had the support of other organisations, from the Liverpool Unwaged Activists to the T&G Community Programme National Shop Stewards Combine. With these comrades, the numbers of our lobby swelled to something well over one hundred – apparently the biggest lobby of the TUC since the miners' Great Strike.

The lobbyists filled virtually the whole of the front of the conference hall enclosed by barriers, and soon the air was ringing with chants of 'Smash ET!', as we demonstrated to the delegates our total opposition to any 'deal' on ET.

The militancy of the lobby won the sympathy of many but also the hatred of some, not least Eric Hammond who was regaled with angry chants of 'scab!' on his way into the congress.

The police turned up in force, with chin straps down, gloves on and not a few with their numbers missing from their uniforms. It seemed a provocation was sought or expected. The TUC bureaucracy was little different to the forces of the state. The attitude of some of the stewards was one of contempt for the unemployed. They refused to accept our 10,000 signatures demanding a boycott of ET, and informed the UWCer attempting to get them received that if he queued for about an hour at reception, we might be able to leave them there.

Some TUC stewards worked hand in glove with the police against the UWC's lobby. The

same force that has battered striking trade unionists around Britain these last few years was used by the trade union hierarchy to ensure that no unemployed or rank and file trade union activist came anywhere near sniffing distance of these mis-leaders of our class.

We were in no way deterred by this, and kept up our chanting from 8.30am to 11am,



Lobbying the TUC

The Bournemouth fringe

Our fringe meeting was lively and well attended, with about eighty people packed into the room – standing room only.

The meeting heard speakers from the P&O National Union of Seamen strikers and the Dover support group, the TGWU Community Programme Shop Stewards Combine and the

to defeat this scheme and overturn the government's Employment Training is at a rank and file level. That's where we have concentrated our activities and that's what's brought our organisation into contact with the Unemployed Workers Charter ... We've shown what employers will get if they take on

ET. And what they're likely to get is organised disruption – what you could call industrial sabotage."

Phil went on to say that his organisation had "actively gone out in organising members in those forms of action." He detailed the need to organise on two fronts, both for a boycott by employed workers and "the second point, which links in with the UWC, is to go to the unemployed, to the dole offices and DHSS and organise there ... the major concern is to get them organised."

The UWC's honorary president, Jack Dash, drew comparisons between the situation when he was an activist in the National Unemployed Workers Movement in the 'thirties and today, emphasising the need to learn the lessons of those past struggles:

"The only way you learn the lessons is to be active ... The job you're doing is a tremendous job. The working class loyalty among you has not been lost. But you've got to go on, you've got to fight. I wish you well in your struggles, and while I've got a breath left in my body, if I can be of help to the unemployed workers' movement, I'll do so."

David Rhys, secretary of the UWC, outlined the need and the potential for an organisation able to stand on the shoulders of the NUWM: "As soon as unemployed workers see something being done, even if only on a small level to start with, then you can start to break through that apathy and despair. That's something that the UWC has shown in the less than two years which it has existed ... The Tories are beating us about the head with such ease at the moment because we have no effective organisation. The UWC is there to provide that organisation." He emphasised



Jack Dash

the character of the UWC as an unambiguously anti-capitalist organisation: "Our concern is not what the system can afford: our concern is that the working class – all the working class – has a decent standard of living. And if the bosses' system cannot afford that, then their system must go."

A lively discussion from the floor followed, especially after the intervention of an executive member of the GMB, who stated the line of his union; to work with ET to somehow 'improve' it. This was answered both from the floor and from the platform, by Phil Griffin, who illustrated the reactionary and illusory nature of this idea. Said GMB bureaucrat headed for the door, tail between legs.

The meeting ended with a promise from the platform that a lot more would be heard from the UWC. Few involved in the lobby could have any doubt in that.



Packed out

UWC.

Phil, a striking seaman, explained the situation of the strikers. He highlighted the lack of backing from the NUS leadership and explained how the unemployed had been used by P&O to attempt to defeat the strikers. This indicated the need for unemployed organisation to mobilise the unemployed as allies of strikers, not their competitors.

Phil Griffin, for the T&G combine told the meeting of the TGWU leadership's attempt to discipline rank and file activists, like those in the combine, who tried to mobilise to smash the government's training schemes.

He went on to explain the combine's perspectives: "The only way, for us as activists,

A call to arms

We are rightly proud of the UWC's achievement in organising this successful action. Many dismal wiseacres of the left will no doubt inform us that the UWC mobilised 'only' one hundred people against ET. They would do to remember that it is 'only' the UWC which is doing anything like this. We can justifiably claim to be in the forefront of the fight against the government's cheap labour schemes. And, armed with our politics, where a hundred now stand, hundreds of thousands will follow.

barter away our rights or to impotently call on the Labour Party or TUC leaders to do this or that. The politics of the UWC are not the politics of buck passing. They are the politics of revolutionary action.

We have bold plans for the future, a fighting programme to smash the state's ET slave labour scheme. The UWC is showing itself as an effective vehicle for campaigning for prin-

cipled politics within the working class. We have only just begun to realise the potential that is there. Greater numbers are being drawn into action on the platform of the UWC than ever before. But we still need many more to spread our ideas and put them into practice. This is a call to arms – take it and fight with the UWC.



Smash ETI

Since its inception, the UWC has aimed to provide a fighting pole of attraction to those of our class who want to take on an active struggle, on the streets and in the workplaces, among the employed and unemployed, for a militant campaign for the rights of the unemployed – the key to this being the organisation of the unemployed and their fighting unity with the employed.

We have taken the first steps in organising the unemployed as a combative arm of the working class. The lobby of the TUC was another step towards our aim of building the National Unemployed Workers Movement our class needs.

The UWC is burying the defeatist lie that all that can be done is to lie back and take it, to



Face to face with the British state

when the Workers Theatre Movement wound up the lobby with their excellent and militant street theatre.

Following this, in a disciplined fashion, the lobbyists – continuing their chanting and with banners raised – marched through Bournemouth to the UWC fringe meeting.



DJORDAN STEVENS

&

WORKERS' THEATRE

Art revolution



"Not dead, just sleeping", said a gravestone I once read. They weren't fooling anyone. The same could be said for the stillborn Communist Party of Britain, with the possible exception of its own members. But the corpse does on occasion stir. One such occasion was its fringe meeting at the TUC, which was entitled "Class Collaborationism or New Realism?". A neat little encapsulation of the differences between the good old fashioned class collaborator CPB and the new realists of the Euro CPGB rump. What do you think? Answers on a postcard to Mike Hicks at the appropriate address.

And so the TUC bids a misty eyed farewell to the EETPU. Hammond and his cronies strutted out of the congress, double chins held high. Scab! shouted the British left. Quite right. But these scabs strutted out of the TUC with their lapels adorned by Solidarnosc badges. Odd, don't you think, that many of those shouting 'scab' the loudest should sport these self-same badges of this pro-capitalist 'union'? A tricky contradiction for those leftists concerned.

"Offer people Freedom and Choices and you'll make a name for yourself" said a recent headline. Below was a photo of Gorbachev. From Soviet Weekly, Morning Star or 7Days? No, it's an advert from the insurance agency, Guardian Royal Exchange in the Financial Times. Well, Mr Gorbachev is certainly the doyenne of the bourgeoisie these days. No doubt he sleeps easier at night knowing that, if he gets dumped as CPSU Gensec, he is at least assured a job flogging life insurance.

In the last edition of this paper – indeed in this very column – we had a little piece on the attempts of British centrists to support perestroika and continue to damn Dubcek's similar schemes in the sixties. This would be all well and good for such as these, who aren't really that concerned with reality just so long as the cheques keep rolling in. But the problem is that Soviet officials insist on dropping them in the crap every so often. Just so recently, the Soviet ambassador in Italy called the Czech policies ended abruptly two decades ago by Soviet led Warsaw Pact forces as a "precursor to perestroika". Listen very carefully and you can hear a distant rumbling. It's centrism's world view disintegrating.

Radical theatre rightly has a bad reputation in Britain today. It is run by a state funded clique. It is divorced from the class struggle. Worse, it is boring. The revolutionary proletariat needs to create its own art forms. Jack Conrad spoke to Tom Cormack, director of the new Workers Theatre Movement, about the beginning that has been made

What was the original Workers Theatre Movement?

In Britain it was founded in 1928. The man who took the lead was Tom Thomas from Lewisham in London. He was a Communist Party member. It soon grew into a movement which had 60 groups up and down the country. Each had its own distinctive name – for example in Manchester it was called the Red Megaphones.

The Workers Theatre Movement was an ideological weapon. It was, by and large, made up of members and sympathisers of the CPGB and the Young Communist League. It had a lively press which acted as a notice board and as a vehicle for circulating scripts. These were often adaptations of American ones – the movement was uncompromisingly internationalist. It had branches in the Soviet Union and all the main capitalist countries, not least Germany, where perhaps this form of theatre was taken to its highest form. In 1933 there was a world Olympiad of the Workers Theatre Movement in Moscow.

Could you tell us something about the WTM's productions?

The Workers Theatre Movement was a revolutionary movement. It therefore mercilessly lampooned the leadership of the Labour Party and the TUC in its productions. These were performed at meetings of the CPGB or National Unemployed Workers Movement and often on the streets. The sketches lasted around 10 minutes. Superficially they appear simple. But this simplicity was only achieved after a great deal of work.

The pieces were designed to get the audiences thinking dialectically. There was a healthy atmosphere of debate inside the movement. One of the big controversies in the movement was whether or not to use props. Those who were against argued that the WTM should be the propless theatre of the propertyless.

In contrast, the mainstream bourgeois theatre of the time was utterly conventional and in a rut.

How would the WTM have compared with the agit prop theatre we saw in the late 1960s – such as 7:84?

Writers on the radical theatre tend to ignore the WTM and see everything beginning in the 1960s. This is a profound mistake. There were similarities. For example, both developments happened at a time when faith in the Labour Party as a vehicle for change was at a low ebb. Indeed it is possible to trace back the origins of radical theatre in the '60s to what the WTM did in the 1930s. But the WTM was a workers' movement! It was made up of workers and it was directed towards working class audiences. The WTM was not an avenue into the 'legit' theatre. This was not the case in the 1960s with radical theatre.

They were actors who wanted to take theatre to the working class. Their theatre did not arise from the working class. The radical theatre groups – as with the petty bourgeois leftists in general – had no theoretical grasp of the past.

Nor were they operating under the discipline or direction of a Communist Party. This was not entirely their fault as, by the 1960s, the CPGB had long ceased to be any sort of a genuine Communist Party. It could no longer function as the memory of the class.

Because of this the radical theatre of the 1960s was never consistently revolutionary and has been easily reabsorbed into bourgeois society. It lingers on thanks to the Arts Council. But has no direction, no guts and no purpose. It has run out of ideas – something new is needed. For this we need to return to the past and the Workers Theatre Movement.

The WTM had in it the embryo of a new, communist, culture. Its methods and form are not out of date. We have to learn from the WTM, stand on its shoulders rather than what happened in the 1960s.

How did the project for a new Workers Theatre Movement come about?

As a communist who is an actor, as soon as I was told about the original Workers Theatre Movement, I realised a new one was needed. For a little while now with Lin Solomn – who was a producer of the Channel 4 film *The People's Flag* – I've been planning a film about the original Workers Theatre Movement.

One of the big problems with it was always how to convey the dynamism of the Workers Theatre Movement. For instance, when it performed during Harry Pollitt's election campaign it had audiences of thousands. Some of that feeling needed to be recreated. Just operating in a studio would at best produce a rosy Hovis ad type picture of the past. That we did not want.

So we started to look at the possibility of presenting them in meetings, on the streets at demonstrations – in situations which correlate with the original – and videoing them. To do this there was a need to get together a group. With this, two birds could be killed with one stone.

I approached friends, radical actors in groups like the SWP, but they could not stomach the class against class politics of the 1930s, favourable references to Moscow and all that. A more formal approach was required. I put an advert in *The Stage*, appealing for working class actors. The response was excellent.

We got over 80 enquiries. Of course, not all were interested or prepared to commit themselves to building a new Workers Theatre Movement. Nevertheless, we've now got a group of around 20 actors. It will not only work on the film, it will provide the core of a new Workers Theatre Movement which will mainly consist of non-professionals.

Even with this to call the group the Workers Theatre Movement is a description of the aim rather than the reality.

Yes that's true. Mainly what I've done so far is to plant a flag. The film is only a means to an end. But things are already happening.

What?

Our first initiative was to perform for the Unemployed Workers Charter, at its send off concert in London, and both at the lobby itself and the fringe meeting. We got a really great response. These were exactly the right sort of events.

We had no problems with individual egos. In bourgeois theatre actors tend to become obsessed with their roles, self centred. Not in our movement. Our actors travelled down to the lobby with everyone else, they slept on the floor, only got three hours kip. There were no moans or groans. Everyone is very keen and already we've got working class militants interested in joining. This is a pointer to the future.

What about the politics of the group? After all, its initial coming together was not an organic development from the struggle.

There has not been much time for political discussion and debate. There are different political views in the group. But whatever the differences they are all pleased to be doing something with meaning and purpose. There is a realisation of the tremendous scope.

We have already been asked to do a benefit for the City of London Anti-Apartheid Group. We will perform one of the most famous WTM sketches called *Meerut*. It's about Indian workers being arrested for setting up a trade union and the appalling conditions in Britain's colonial jails. It is a call for proletarian internationalist solidarity from workers in Britain and has great relevance given the situation in South Africa and Ireland today. This and actions like the UWC's lobby will provide the ideal conditions for furthering the political consciousness and cohesion of the group.

What about the question of scripts? The original WTM stuff which you are using is clearly of tremendous worth, but new material is needed.

Yes, we need to confront the question of writing new scripts. But we must fully absorb the techniques of the past first. Only then can we stand on the shoulders of the WTM.

The initial step on scripts is to work on introductions to the pieces so that they become an integral part of them. This will involve making sharp political points, for example to those at the City Group benefit. We must be perfectly clear on what genuine proletarian internationalism is.

So political clarity is important? Of course! It's central! Personally, being a supporter of *The Leninist*, I see its politics flowing into the new pieces. Lin Solomn would not be averse to that either.

Until there is a genuine Communist Party, the working class lacks direction, it cannot operate as a class for itself. We will develop pieces which emphasise that what the working class needs is a Communist Party. Only *The Leninist* has a full grasp of what a Communist Party is and only *The Leninist* is capable of building it.

There will be political arguments. But I'm sure that clarity will triumph and the group will go forward. Already those in the WTM are being influenced by Leninism. They are taking our level and forms of activity as the norm. We will have none of the problems we do with those who carry with them the ideological baggage and slothfulness of the established left. The further *The Leninist* can go, the further the Workers Theatre Movement can go.

For more information on the Workers Theatre Movement write to Tom Cormack c/o BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX.



Old Fads

Communist Party of Britain, *Communist Review*, No.1, London, Autumn 1988, pp.30, £1.

IT HAS TAKEN the Communist Party of Britain five months to get this journal together. It is the CPB's only proposed regular publication and it is planned to be only a quarterly. This alone is enough to expose as a lie the CPB claim to be *The Party*. The CPB not only has a part time general secretary, it has a part time approach to politics. This is symptomatic of degenerate opportunism, an opportunism which has nothing whatsoever to do with genuine communism or a genuine Communist Party.

Of course, this practice flows from theory. Not surprisingly therefore the ideas contained between the covers of *Communist Review* remind one more of a collection of particularly silly and restrictive fashions of yesteryear than Marxism-Leninism. None of the revisionist 'designer socialism' peddled by *Marxism Today* here. Instead we get the ideological equivalent of platform shoes, the beehive hairdo and drain pipe trousers ie three decades of cast-off rubbish from the *Marxism Today* wardrobe.

What is presented as "Marxism-Leninism" is an odd mixture of the revisionist dogma emanating from the 'official' communist movement circa 1951, 1960, 1977 all spiced with an unhealthy dose of Gorbachevism. Hence *Communist Review* is not consistent - even in its opportunism - something which *Marxism Today* can at least lay claim to because it now always adopts the *current* fad patronised by the left wing of bourgeois liberalism. *Communist Review* is, as a result of its eclecticism, a scarecrow of threadbare ideas which frightens no-one and which certainly does not impress. *Communist Review* tries to fight today's *Marxism Today*, true ... but its weapon is yesterday's *Marxism Today*.

This method of ideological struggle is particularly evident in *Shifting the balance*, the article by Mike Hicks, the part time general secretary of the CPB (originally he was called the "honorary general secretary" - why the change in title? - DS). It must be said that although he tries, Hicks is no working class intellectual.

His version of leadership is a rather uneasy blend of hail fellow well met chat and the bureaucratic heavy hand. Hicks has in other words more in common with British trade union officialdom than communism. Naturally an ideological cover for the resulting reformist practice has to be found. That it is second hand, indifferent and so profoundly unattractive is not particularly Hicks' fault. It is a product of his upbringing. He learnt his politics in the dull, unimaginative school of right opportunism which dominated the

"official" communist movement throughout the 1950s and 60s. He is in other words from the same mould which produced Gordon McLennan, his CPGB mirror image.

What Hicks' lead article in *Communist Review* lacks in sweep and insight, he makes up with stale official optimism. Unfortunately there is so much to object to in this article that space does not allow a full account, let alone rebuttal, of its hand-me-down solecisms, elementary fallacies, naive pacifist illusions and straight forward reformist howlers. So we will concentrate on one central question - the world balance of forces. As will be seen, it is the backbone of the CPB's body politic.

As far as Hicks is concerned: "Taking the international situation as whole, we are witnessing the effects of the shift in the balance of forces against imperialism which have been developing ever since the war." (p.3) This is not just a case of wishful thinking. It is self imposed blindness ... and there are none so blind as those who will not see.

The idea that there was a "decisive" shift in the world balance of forces against imperialism was used as an excuse for the CPGB to adopt the *British Road to Socialism*, a full blown reformist programme, in 1951. And it was on the "basis" of this revisionist document that the CPB was formed in April 1988 (p.7). So for Hicks restating the idea that the world balance of forces has "decisively" shifted is not so much a matter of fact, more of self justification.

The truth is that the expansion of socialism and the successes of the forces of national liberation, which we saw in the aftermath of World War II, has with a number of important exceptions been (temporarily) halted. Capitalism shows all the signs of heading towards a new general crisis, but it must be recognised that this by no means leads to an automatic strengthening of the forces of socialism. To suggest that it does is to fall into a mechanical way of thinking. Real life is dialectical and full of contradictions.

We are living through an epoch characterised by the transition from capitalism to communism. Yet the fact that this transition is carried through via the medium of revolutions and the establishment of socialist states in what are capitalism's weak links, means that it is not and cannot be a smooth uninterrupted process. Our epoch is one of war, revolution and counterrevolution. Hence we see partial victories but also temporary setbacks and reversals. Only with the formation of the World Union of Socialist Republics can we talk of decisive victory. There is not a hint of this from Hicks.

It was never correct for Stalin to put forward the idea that socialism in the Western bourgeois democracies would come through what was in essence a parliamentary road. Nonetheless in the aftermath of World War II when the Soviet Union had just emerged as the world's second power, when the world's most populous country, China, and half of Europe had just been won to socialism, such a suggestion was not stupid. It is today.

The socialist world is being eroded from the edges and corroded from within. The socialist countries are divided among themselves and in no position to bury the West. They are in danger themselves from the forces of capitalism. In relative terms the Soviet Union is a declining world power, its manufactured goods are inferior and in industrial production it has already been overtaken by Japan.

More, it cannot be denied that

Gorbachev has a programme of 'market socialism'. He is constructing a social base for his technocratic wing of the bureaucracy to - if unchecked - transform itself into a new capitalist class. A broadly similar course is being pursued by the Deng leadership in China.

As to Eastern Europe - whose road to socialism is recommended in *Communist Review* by Ron Bellamy - it is a powder keg of counterrevolution. Like Louis XVIII the opportunist leadership in Poland seems unable to learn from history. It is thus doomed to repeat the crises of 1956, 1970, 1976 and 1980 until it is destroyed. It has reduced its support in society to time servers and government officials. The working class - what is meant to be the *ruling* class - has been almost completely alienated. The situation in other Eastern European countries is only different by degree; in Yugoslavia - torn apart by narrow nationalist rivalries - perhaps it is worse.

So there is no room for the complacency, apologia and official optimism we see in *Communist Review*. What is necessary for the cause of communism is fighting selflessly, unyieldingly and single-mindedly for a *social* revolution in our own country and raising the call for the working class to carry through a *political* revolution in the Soviet Union - the world's revolutionary centre - so as to transform the bureaucracy from the master of society into its servant. If the CPB cannot do this - if it tries to survive as other 'official' communists have through political prostitution - then it will soon find itself extinct, vaguely remembered by the revolutionary proletariat but definitely not mourned.

David Sherriff

How not to fight

John Peck, *Poll Tax - how it will hit you*, CPGB 1988, pp.24, £0.80p

JOHN PECK, CPGB Nottingham City councillor since 1987, is the living embodiment of the CPGB's *British Road to Socialism*. His booklet on the poll tax, or community charge, was published earlier this year and can be seen as a sort of Eurocommunist guide to mobilising the "broad democratic alliance" against the Tories' reining in of the local state.

When it comes to a concrete strategy to defeat the poll tax, the booklet can talk of no more than bringing together the broad democratic alliance of 'progressive' forces to turn 'public opinion' against poll tax. Boycott campaigns are considered too radical. Peck chooses not to discuss at what point illegal defiance should be considered. The upshot of this is that - reading between the lines - we should not be asking people to break the law in the campaign against the poll tax.

Peck gives the reader some useful ins and outs of the community charge, as well as rather silly speculation on the Thatcherite ideology behind poll tax.

So what are the facts? The poll tax will be more difficult and more costly to collect than rates, the typical working class family with adult children living at home will be much worse off, whilst the net contribution from the rich and business will drop drastically.

So how to fight the poll tax? As

expected, Peck offers an alternative way for the bourgeoisie to tax the working class. This alternative is local income tax. "... a system based on ability to pay, with industry, commerce, and landed interests paying their fair share" (p10). Indeed, so 'sensible' is this local income tax that the Liberal Party is campaigning for it, although, curiously, we are informed that the Labour Party dropped this sort of idea back in 1974. Local income tax would be levied on income, pensions and investment income, the rate of tax being determined by each particular authority.

This is typical of the reformism of the Euro led CPGB. The task of communists is not to advise the bourgeoisie how best to tax the working class. We say not a penny to the bourgeois state. Make the rich pay - not the workers. No tax on the working class by the bourgeois state is *fair*. The task of a genuine communist party is to demonstrate to the working class that the bourgeoisie - by its very nature - expropriates not only surplus value from the producers of their wealth, but also reduces the living standards of ordinary people by making them pay for the waste, inefficiency and reactionary nature of their state.

A genuine communist party arms the working class with an understanding of how capitalism exploits and oppresses them, and acts as a general staff of the working class in bringing about the final overthrow of capitalism. In these tasks, the CPGB acts as a block on the development of working class consciousness by becoming an apologist for capitalism, and as an organisation that spends its time advising the capitalist class on how best to run its system so as to keep the masses contented.

The broad democratic alliance needs to be built in opposition to the community charge, argues councillor Peck. But "...can the poll tax be defeated?", and "...can nine million trade unionists be mobilised against the poll tax?". Yes, says Peck ... by emphasising to people that "the community charge represents a major attack on democracy" (p13).

No, what must be emphasised is that democracy under capitalism is a sham, that the poll tax is an attack on the living standards of the working class. That is how the working class will be mobilised and the poll tax defeated.

Peck's, and the CPGB's, talk of a democratic Britain is thoroughly liberal. Thus we read: "Communists seek not less but more powers for local councils." ... "The Communist Party's aim is for a Socialist Britain, in which the main means of production, distribution and exchange are publicly

owned and controlled. Strong, independent and accountable local councils raising a substantial proportion themselves of the money needed for services are essential for the kind of socialism we envisage for Britain" (p10).

This is, of course, pre-Facing up to the future. Since Peck wrote this pamphlet, his party has taken yet another step to the right and has all but dropped its talk of socialism. More than that we have also seen where the CPGB's strategy on poll tax leads in practice. In Scotland - where the CPGB still retains a certain position in the official labour movement - the refusal of the Euros to advocate a (illegal) boycott has not only led to the rapid growth of the SNP but has failed to inspire the masses. The Scottish TUC's "11th hour" protest against poll tax was a flop.

Genuine communists seek not more powers for local government, but the overthrow of the bourgeois state, *including* the local government state apparatus, replacing it with workers' councils. This is the only genuine democracy we support - the democracy of the proletarian dictatorship. Even then we recognise that at best this state is a necessary evil.

The aim of a genuine Communist Party is *communism*, the negation of class society, where the state has withered away and individuals are free to develop themselves fully. Socialism is the next stage in the development of human society, a dialectical development that signifies the advancing of mankind towards communism. Socialism and the socialist state, in itself, is not our aim.

In reality Peck is no communist. He is not even anti-capitalist. The best that can be said of him is that he is anti-Tory. Under capitalism, a communist ought to be putting forward demands based on what the working class needs to lead a decent life. What Peck does is put forward 'reasonable' demands on the basis of what capitalism can afford. Given the very nature of capitalism this is to put forward demands on the working class to accept the capitalist system and its squeezing of our living standards. We say no to the poll tax and no to local income tax.

An analogy with the Tories poll tax is drawn in Peck's booklet; that of poll tax of 1381. England was at war with France. Parliament decided to levy a 4d poll tax which was quickly increased to a shilling in 1380. In 1381, commissioners were sent around the country to collect the arrears. This, according to Peck, precipitated the greatest popular revolt England has ever seen. There are lessons here for 1988. But not the ones John Peck wants to teach us.

Nigel Saville

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Brent: Huge potential

THE STRUGGLE in Brent against the proposed vicious cuts of the Labour council is at a critical stage. Those forces who are currently heading the 'fightback', the Labour left and the Socialist Workers Party, have simply run out of ideas. Their dismally unimaginative, reformist and bureaucratic approach has done nothing to mobilise the rank and file.

Yet, although the Brent council workers are at the moment *passive*, they have not been *defeated*. The problem is that the leadership they are currently saddled with has totally failed to unleash their huge potential power against the council bosses. The task now is to spark that power and create the organisational structures that can channel it so as to defend Brent workers' jobs and the — admittedly pathetic — community services.

The September 15 special branch meeting of Brent Nalgo — whose members are expected to bear the brunt of the council's sweeping redundancies — graphically illustrated the problems that prevent the branch leadership providing an effective lead.

The fact that only around 250 workers out of 3,000 actually turned up is a direct result of its failure to present a winning strategy. Many Nalgo members refused to 'waste their time' by going to the meeting at all because "we've heard all the arguments before. It's just all talk — so what's the point of wasting an afternoon?" This is a common complaint with many members.

This attitude is wrong, but understandable. The Nalgo branch leadership must take the blame for the cynicism with which most of the rank and file regard the union. And that cynicism is not simply accounted for by the fact that Nalgo and the other unions have proved themselves just about useless in resisting the council's latest round of attacks.

Brent unions — and in particular Nalgo — have compromised themselves totally in the past by collaborating with the Labour council in its anti-working class attacks on their own members and other workers under the banner of 'anti-racism/anti-sexism', as in for example the shameful Maureen McGoldrick affair (see *The Leninist* numbers 44 and 49).

In reality, the 'radical' posturing of Labourite councils, as with Brent in relation to women and blacks, has been used to split the workforce and turn it in on itself. The council's so-called anti-sexist and anti-racist rules and regulations have nothing to do with fighting sexism nor racism. This requires taking on the capitalist system and its state — not banning words like 'blackleg'.

Brent council's 'anti-sexism' and 'anti-racism' has only benefited thin strata in, for example the 'race relations industry', which is interested in climbing the middle class career ladder. The council has seen to it that a climate of fear has been created so that the workers are divided and cowed. So although most non-sexist, non-racist workers see nothing good in the council's 'anti-sexism' and 'anti-racism', few dare say so openly —

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those that do are instantly and automatically branded racist or sexist.

That this has been done with the support of the unions — mainly Nalgo — has alienated the masses from the unions. Consequently, although the membership has been prepared, so far, to respond to calls from their union leadership for action — as on August 17 when 80% of the staff struck for a day — few of them have involved themselves in the debates on how to defend their jobs and the services used by the local working class community. There can be no doubt that the blame for this must be laid at the feet of the leadership.

Its motion to the special general meeting in opposition to the council's proposed cuts was moved by branch secretary, and recent SWP recruit, Jim Roche. Typically, it conspicuously failed to address itself to the real problems hampering the fightback. In effect it limited itself to calling for a 'yes' vote to enable the branch to instruct its membership to take "indefinite branch wide strike action" if the council goes ahead with "compulsory redundancies".

The fact that this was agreed by a meeting that was barely quorate should not be used to dismiss the fighting potential that exists. The real question is, does the resolution provide a real fighting strategy to mobilise this potential? We say it does not. Its "branch wide" approach is typical of the sectionalism that has proved so damaging to the working class movement in Britain, particularly over the last decade.

We have to start to fight *now* to build a united workers' front, Brent-wide, inter-union and with representatives from all working class organisations in the borough. And the most effective form for that to take is a Council of Action — what Leninists in Brent Nalgo have consistently agitated for.

Some 'lefties' in Brent have opposed our call for a Council of Action with the frankly pathetic argument that we have first to win all out strike action from Brent Nalgo members before we can even think about involving other workers, like the teachers, who are ballotting on strike action as these lines are being written. This is akin to arguing that an army should first throw itself into battle and only then give any thought to a battle plan.

Brent Nalgo will not win a strike on its own. In fact, it will be practically impossible to win even the

Nalgo workers themselves without presenting them with a realistic strategy for victory, a strategy which will ensure that they will not fight alone and thus go down to defeat.

Strategies that are limited to the go-it-alone approach are not simply flawed as fighting packages; they are in fact a *cop out*. Their only purpose is to allow the likes of the SWP to maintain their left credentials. But when one examines the SWP's position in some detail, it quickly becomes clear that their 'battle plan' is as reformist as the Labour lefts'.

The leaflet distributed outside the special branch meeting by SWPers, supporting the resolution that their comrade Jim Roche successfully moved, was an elaborate exercise in *buck-passing*, not a call for militant action.

The leaflet notes that the national leadership of Nalgo have a policy of supporting workers taking action against redundancy. "It is their responsibility to implement this policy ... a serious strategy of strike action campaigned for by the national leadership can knock back the Tories and defend jobs and services" the leaflet says. True, but in the real world, will the Nalgo bureaucracy "implement this policy"? Even the SWP doubts it. So where does this leave the SWP's strategy? Yes, in tatters.

The truth is that the SWP cannot show Brent workers how to win — only how to be defeated. It has no winning strategy.

As far as the SWP is concerned, Brent workers can do nothing to defend their jobs and living standards themselves; they have to rely on the Nalgo bureaucracy. According to this organisation, the key to beating the Tories is an indefinite strike by Brent Nalgo workers alone, campaigned for and backed to the hilt by the national leadership of the union, which will have the potential to get the council "scuttling to the negotiating table" presumably in order to 'see sense' and withdraw the proposed cuts.

An interesting scenario, comrades. Tell us, have you recruited the Brothers Grimm in the last few months? If not, whoever you have writing your leaflets definitely seems to have commensurate powers of fantasy spinning.

The resolution presented to the September 15 meeting by supporters of *The Leninist*, in contrast to the left Labourites and their loyal opposition in the SWP, denounced the Labour council as employers,

must 'break out' of Brent!

• Clarity on what exactly is going on in Brent is also a vital necessity. The Labour council are not 'misguided friends' of the working class as some are trying to present them. The SWP's lauding of the potential of strike action, to send the bosses "scuttling to the negotiating table", implies this essentially reformist perspective and dovetails neatly with how national union bureaucracies tend to view strike action. Essentially, the potential of workers taking industrial action is used as a bargaining counter by the union tops, not as a militant weapon to defeat the employers. Brent workers can afford no illusions in the council, nor left talking councillors.

• There must be no playing with the demand for strike action. For us it is not just another bargaining counter to throw back and forth between negotiators on either side; it is a weapon to be used against our enemies the bosses, in this case Brent council.

• Essential services should be maintained under workers' control. The council could just sit out a strike by its workers, as the service nature of much of the work means that the people to suffer most would be the local working class. Maintaining selected services under workers' control would not only practically undercut the council's position, it would also be a powerful political step forward for the workers and provide a good basis for translating the undoubtedly supported our position ... and that would have had a tremendous impact.

If this militant minority can be organised around such a fighting platform as our supporters advocated, then the majority of the workforce would soon be won. So it is to the militant minority that we are directing ourselves to in the run up to the Nalgo Annual General Meeting on October 25.

Our perspectives are very different to that of the incumbent Labour left/SWP branch leadership. Ours is a winning strategy. We say:

- Build a *Council of Action*, uniting Brent workers across union divides and drawing in representatives of the local working class community. This Council of Action must be elected by mass meetings and delegates to it must be recallable at all times to ensure that they are accountable to, and representative of, the rank and file.

• The creation of this type of body is the most pressing organisational task facing Brent workers. Simply calling on the union bureaucracy for action, as the SWP seems determined to do, is quite useless.

If the running of any strike — all out or selective — is left to the union leaders to (dis)organise, the effects will be disastrous. The majority of workers would simply be left atomised in their front rooms, prey to the influences of the bosses' media and the pressures of personal life. The strike would quickly collapse and the national leadership no doubt would point to this failure in order to blame the members for their failure.

We have to actively involve the majority of workers *now*, through such means as workplace meetings and other forms of action which educate rather than atomise.

- Speakers must be despatched to other London boroughs and around the country. This is a battle against the Tory government: therefore we must seek to involve as many workers as possible, we

Brent Nalgo Leninist Supporters

For news, analysis and a fighting strategy for the struggle, all Brent workers should read *Brent — Unite and Fight!*, bulletin of Brent Nalgo Leninist Supporters. Send sae to BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX.